The normalization of crisis also serves to open specific opportunities for people to refuse existing forms of governance (Lorey 2015, 4). Possibilities for organization and resistance under Crisis State capitalism are on a different footing than occurs during the arrangements of the welfare state period. In the Crisis State period, “a new population presents itself that wants to reaffirm the capacity of expressing itself democratically against the war that is coming, against the new totalitarian media organization of the social, against the precaritization that is promoted” (Negri 2008, 94). This includes moves beyond political representation through direct action and direct democracy, rather than the mediation of electoralism and parliamentarism. It also involves the direct presentation of needs and desires, including through self-produced means of expression (activist media, indymedia, etc.).

Some of the most provocative challenges to capital and states have come from collective resistance among the diverse precarious. These include uprisings of the poor, movements against detention and deportation, indigenous movements. And notably the new uprisings and mobilizations against crisis have been driven by their needs rather than the limits of legality and so-called civil protest. They overflow the bounds of dissent as an act of citizenship or action permissible to instituted authorities. The
new movements pursue an illegalism that takes its lead from the needs of participants rather than the preferences or priorities of the state. They do not let the authorities define or limit their actions in the manner of symbolic protest or civil disobedience.

Unlike the managerial search for inclusion and legalistic obedience of relations under the Planner State, it must express disobedience of the precarious. These refusals, this uncivil disobedience, becomes important in rethinking resistance.

No Way Back Machine: The Planner State and Its Nostalgists

The Planner State management of insecurity provided a bulwark against the prospect of revolt or insurrection. One effect, significantly, of the Planner State is to undermine the autonomy of the working class and to bring its class institutions within a legalistic framework. This is perhaps most notable in the legal framework for union recognition. In Planner State arrangements, the trade union is recognized and gains standing purely within a legislative framework of legal bargaining over specific forms of a labor contract and so-called collective bargaining. Part of this is to ensure the limitation of labor’s demands to those of technocrats (rather than social considerations of working-class communities) — such as hourly wage, job description, some conditions of layoff, etc. The contract form also, fundamentally, asserts the right of capital to ownership and control of the workplace and its products. Crucially, the working class abandons its claims of ownership and control — and over time even forgets that such claims are part of its history, its entitlement.

Even more, the working class gives up its foundational power to stop work — it gives up the right to wildcat (unannounced, unregulated) strikes. Strikes, the right and capacity to withdraw labor, are reduced to pre-announced, pre-arranged, pre-scheduled, permitted events, limited in duration, location, and intensity. Precisely so bosses can prepare for a strike (by stocking
supplies or building up product), ahead of time. Strikes become legal in form — stipulating when and where they can occur and who might participate. This is a reworking of the very idea of collective action and labor power. For this reworking (a capitulation) labor receives in return no equivalent.

More than this though, the Planner State arrangements build working-class dependence on the capitalist state for the provision of necessary, essential, resources — in healthcare, education, elder care, child care, housing, etc. This process of dependence has been examined in detail by the anarchist Colin Ward. As Alan Sears suggests, one of the main factors in the decline of working-class infrastructures of resistance has been the so-called success of the working class (in limited and legalistic terms).

Despite the longing and wistful nostalgia of too much of the Left (despite repeated failures and disappointments, from the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Canada to the Workers’ Party (PT) in Brazil to Syriza in Greece), there is no return to the Planner State to be had. No way back to the future. As Lorey suggests, “There is no longer a centre or a middle that could be imagined as a society stable enough to take in those pushed to the margins. In the context of the current economic and political crises it is no longer sufficient to demand an equal, pluralistic society on republican foundations” (2015, 60–61). This is true both because it is clear in the context of Crisis States that capital will not allow it and because it cannot even begin to meet the social or environmental needs of the subjugated. The terms of settlement are off and there is no appetite (or reason) for capital to pursue or accept something along the lines of the welfare state compromise. Neither is there a reason for contemporary movements to set their sights so low, to follow a false path.

The idea that there can be a just and egalitarian management of capitalism remains, as Negri puts it, a mad idea. Capital cannot survive without exploitation. Socialists mistakenly thought there could be a just measure of exploitation. And their remnants in social democratic parties, social reform movements,
and NGOs still do. This has been their futile pursuit over three decades of neoliberalism.

The Western socialists and social democrats have remained Stalinists but are not socialists anymore. They went from the fetishization of the Soviet Union to complete abandonment of any possibility of the transformation of life and society. They gave a bureaucratic interpretation to the ideas and expressions of “real socialism.” This has now turned to cynicism (Negri 2008).

From 1968, famously, people in the West “start to consider the possibility of producing wealth and freedom at the same time” (Negri 2008, 23). The socialists arrive at the same point in 1989, but, overcome by events, they become unambiguous apologists for capitalism (Negri 2008, 25).

The social democratic Frankenstein attempts to revive a dead corpse shows the Left adheres to the internal logic of crisis and domination. States of all stripes fear any sense of rupture. They prefer transition. The focus of states is governance rather than politics.

“We Are Ungovernable”:
Terms of Refusal

The decades of austerity governance under the Crisis State shows clearly the end of a social democratic rapprochement with capital. The terms have changed, largely in benefit of capital, and the social result for the subjugated has been a regression to the terms of early laissez faire conditions. At the same time, however, “this regression, bringing with it huge increases in poverty rates, social polarization, and general human suffering, has catalyzed opposition” (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 102). This is the field of precarious capitalism and of movements against precarity.

Among the most notable forms of resistance have been the variety of “new poor people’s movements that have emerged since from the late 1980s to today in response, partly, to the intensifying destruction of social safety nets” (Dyer-Witheford
1999, 103). In the context of Western liberal democracies some of the most inspiring and informative examples include the anti-borders movements of immigrants and refugees, movements against eviction and foreclosure, direct action anti-poverty movements, and the movements against police violence in poor racialized neighborhoods. These forces have found expression in virtually every country of North American and Europe, from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty in Canada to the *indignados* in Spain. Uprisings against colonial impoverishment of indigenous communities have erupted in and against all settler colonial states.

Significantly, these movements have refused confinement within the parameters of actions/activism considered appropriate for “responsible citizens.” Beyond the civil disobedience characteristic of many new social movements, these new poor people’s movements have developed and practiced a diverse repertoire of “uncivil practices.” This expresses a growing awareness of the limitations of state-centered and legalistic actions within the context of precarious capitalism and Crisis States. As Del Re suggests, “Protesting by using the language of rights obviously means asking the State’s permission for protection. ‘Rights’ are invoked, contested, distributed, and protected, but also limited and appointed by the law” (1996, 107). Within the new poor people’s movements, the symbolic action and march have been replaced by “multiple, small-scale, ‘in-yr-face’ actions” (McKay 1998, 269, n.4). As McKay has noted with reference to the rise of direct action politics in the earlier period of neoliberalism:

Activism means action: whereas in earlier decades opposition to, say, a construction project or an industrial pollutant might have meant a group standing at the gates handing out leaflets, today it is more likely to be voiced by invading the offices and disrupting work, trashing the computers and throwing files out the windows. (1998, 5)

Notably, actions that move beyond the bounds of state and capitalist permissibility raise important prospects for understanding
and acting against interlocked systems of exploitation and oppression. Particular struggles may link up “as part of a practical critique of the whole capital relation” (Aufheben 1998, 105). They raise the contradiction between the values of communities (in care) of the subjugated and the state capitalist drive for value (in exploitation).

Such struggles may be both valid in their own right (that is they satisfy our immediate needs as opposed to those of capital) and point directly to a higher level of struggle; a victory may create new needs and desires (which people then feel confident to set about satisfying) and new possibilities (which make the satisfaction of these and other needs and desires more likely), and so on. (Aufheben 1998, 105)

Direct action and disruptive politics base opposition on the self-directed power of the subjugated themselves rather than on an imagined representation from elsewhere (in the form of instituted authorities or experts). “What both leftist and eco-reformist positions have in common is that they both look outside ourselves and our struggles for the real agent of change, the real historical subject: leftists look to ‘the party’ while eco-reformists look to parliament” (Aufheben 1998, 106). The direct actionists assert a do-it-ourselves ethos. The political significance of disruptive politics is found less in the immediate aims of particular actions or in the immediate costs to capital and the state but “more in our creation of a climate of autonomy, disobedience and resistance” (Aufheben 1998, 107). This is building, through experience, a capacity for struggle and capacity for realizing alternatives.

As British autonomist paper Aufheben (1998, 107–108) has noted with respect to squatting, “Moreover, a situation without the dull compulsion of rent, work, bills, and so on, provided the basis for creating and reinventing a community, which, in turn, encouraged other ideas.” In sum, this daily existence of thoroughgoing struggle was simultaneously a negative act (stopping the road, etc.) and a positive pointer to the kind of social rela-
tions that could exist: no money, the end of exchange values, communal living, no wage labor, no ownership of space (*Aufheben* 1998, 110). No representative or legalistic forms of politics can approach this capacity building and experience in making practical alternatives real in the materiality of everyday life.

The new movements become uncontrollable for the instituted mechanisms of governance. They are unpredictable and autonomous. This makes them frightening for the state. The uncontrollable raise the specter of rupture, of *scission*. They pose the prospect, most frightening for the state, of secession. These groups hold a potential to take down the whole social structure (Castel 1995).

Popular actions and uprisings are, by definition, illegal. In the occupations in disparate global sites people collectively resolved “insoluble problems without the help of the state” (Badiou 2012, 111). Freely associating, they constitute themselves, their creative power, without the state. Affinity replaces coercion.

### A Note on Violence

Riots are promising in that they hold things as they are, current conditions, as intolerable, unreformable, irremedial, unacceptable, and (most dangerous of all for authorities of all stripes) as beyond compromise. In reality, it is more important, for the moment, to make it impossible for the police to act, to show the capacity to resist the state of siege. Resistance to the state of siege raises important problems of strategy to be addressed. Emerging infrastructures of resistance must be prepared and capable of defending themselves, both against physical assault and against cooptation or incorporation. The state responses are about governance rather than public security.

Perhaps the most striking example of riotous opposition and insurrectionary impulse, at least in Western liberal democracies, is provided by the black bloc tactic during street demonstrations. The black bloc offers a step beyond both the reformism
or protest politics and the authoritarian permissibility of legalistic civil disobedience. The black bloc, in which all participants dress in black and cover their faces to avoid surveillance and criminalization while engaging in whatever actions are deemed necessary to bring ruling authorities to crisis, visually show unity in diversity and solidarity in action. They act according to their needs and desires rather than the limits of what police deem to be acceptable “protest” routine or ritual.

For Negri, the black bloc are mistaken. In his view they represent a Nietzschean solitary revolt, which, while morally efficacious, always loses politically (Negri 2008, 96). His concern is not with their revolt, but results from the fact that they do not revolt with others in the movement. Rather, “they revolt against the others with a claim of purity, and individualist height that isolates them. In this individual isolation of rebellion I don’t see reconstruction” (Negri 2008, 97). In as sense, while their actions might be correct, they stand alone. They do not allow a positive recomposition of oppositional fighting force. In Negri’s view:

I am against the individualism of rebellious action just as much as possessive individualism. I maintain that the renewal of the movements is always collective in any form and in any movement of their recomposition. The figure of the industrial worker, of the proletariat, of the exploited worker doesn’t exist if not in a collective form. Nobody was ever exploited alone. (2008, 96)

So too are the actual impacts of the black bloc limited. They also represent an individual, an isolated, scream of anger and outrage. They do not pose the broad and antisystemic force of proletarian uprising, even of a workplace strike. The damage of the black bloc needs to be put in proper context, not only with the violence of the state and corporations, but in relation to recent forms of proletarian violence. The events in Paris, the uprisings in the banlieues, showed the real extent of the black bloc actions: “thirty cars in three days in Genoa, while in Paris more than fifteen hundred in a single night of urban jacquerie” (Negri
The point here is an important one and speaks to the character of urban uprisings based in the actions of the subjugated in their neighborhoods and on behalf of their own needs rather than the angry dissatisfaction of the protester or activist.

Yet debates over the black bloc within movements are significant and stand for something more. The polemics over the black bloc are, more importantly, expressing a theme of the expulsion of violence from the movements. In Genoa violence was applied by the movement beyond the black blocs, yet some argued still for non-violence or “passive violence,” much as they had in Quebec City. There is a strong idea that movements should not express a violence that goes beyond passive resistance. For Negri, this is “false theoretically and historically, morally and politically” (2008, 98). The notion of resistance without violence is a distortion of history and an effect of power that reinforced power.

Such illegalist moments and movements are subjected to various practices of repression and recuperation. Various attempts are made “to bring back into an institutional framework the scandalous phenomena of ‘no-go areas,’ behaviors or territories that defy the logic of the police and the marketplace, and ask to be recognized and legitimated above all at the material and symbolic level” (Illuminati 1996, 177). This includes moral regulation and the spectacle of moral panics against insubordinates of various types. It, of course includes, the moralizing punishment of police actions in the streets (violence against rebels as a means of taming them and those who are watching and otherwise inspired by them) and the patronizing lectures of police press conferences afterwards.

It also includes, perhaps less recognized and remarked upon, the sanctimonious and self-satisfied actions of other movement participants. This takes the form of an “internal policing” of the movements and is at least as fatal for resistance as the external policing of the cops. Thus one hears after almost every direct action or disruptive demonstration the condemnations of the “peaceful protesters” and fundamentalists of civil disobedience. Playing the role of public relations specialists for the state and
capital, these “reasonable activists” work to delegitimize direct actionists and insurrectionists in the eyes of the public while simultaneously presenting law and order and legalistic frameworks as the only proper and acceptable terms of dissent, thus posing legitimate opposition as always only a loyal opposition.

As Negri has stated forcefully, and rightly, “A Left that imagines movements without the capacity to express themselves in a violent way falsifies reality and mystifies the nature of the movements” (2008, 98). Violence simply happens. It is a part of the material existence of human relations. According to Negri, “My apology for violence is anything other than an apology of criminal acts, or of those predisposed to hurt the other. I only say that to eliminate violence from the political debate is banal, like thinking of being able not to eat and drink. Violence is part of human reality” (2008, 99). Social relations are violent, but not necessarily because people want it. It is not to say that violence has to be presented as a necessary element in the construction of an alternative society. At the same time, for Negri, in exodus there is always need of a rear guard that can combat where needed.

Negri makes the crucial point, often obscure to modern-day would-be revolutionaries who see themselves as players in a historical drama, that the coup d’état, the overthrow of the state by a violent minority, is not part of the communist project in the current context. What does it mean to eliminate violence from social relations in the current context of the state of permanent exception? Those who want to expel violence from class relations are either reactionaries or revisionists. For Negri, the Left has never managed to achieve a “realistic analysis of violence” (2008, 100). Yet communism as the transformation of reality is not constituted primarily through instrumental violence. According to Negri, “Only in the most acute revolutionary periods has it been shown to be joyous, because its power consisted in making death distant” (2008, 100). That is, violence of the subjugated is deployed against a normalized violence that is not even taken as such. This can include the unnamed class violence
of hunger and homelessness or the more obvious class violence of police killings and militarization.

The times for action have changed. As Negri puts it, “The conquest of the Winter Palace today doesn’t have anything to do anymore with the communist project. The problem seems to me to be another one. It consists in the common and in the exercise of the common” (2008, 99). This is a positive and constructive practice, building infrastructures, ensuring survival, rather than a destructive one. The new violence is generalized and present everywhere. In response, resistance appears as exodus, the “leaving of this world” (Negri 2008, 101). Yet the new world cannot be constructed by pretending that there is no violence (Negri 2008, 101).

With the socialist dictators violence entered “the sadness of power” once more as the difference disappeared between the way in which the socialist parties understood violence and the way it was interpreted by the capitalists and their governments (Negri 2008, 100). The thing that is crucial to emphasize in any historical analysis is not the madness of domination but the force of resistance (Negri 2008).

Coming Together:
New Recompositions

The alter movements are for a collective action. The destructive refrain requires a revolutionary process. Precarity, austerity, and crisis provide bases for new alliances. These alliances are asserting relations of communal care and refusing the dividing logics of protection and security for some, on a hierarchical basis, but not for others (Lorey 2015, 91). The affective labor, highlighted in neoliberal capitalist production processes, redeployed now, becomes a starting point for connections with others that break the isolation of crisis conditions.

The precarious cannot be unified and represented in traditional political forms. By definition the precarious are diverse
and dispersed. They are so in the many fields of production in which they labor. They come from disparate, migrant backgrounds and work in diverse fields. They labor in temporary jobs. They are also dispersed in life. Often they must travel long distances for jobs (within a locale or to other locales). There is often great separation between home and work life. Often they are excluded from, or unknown to, social service agencies (those of social welfare rather than of criminalization).

And traditional organizations of representation, from unions to political parties, have abandoned or overlooked much of the precarious (migrants, homeless, service sector workers, those in small workplaces, etc.). New politics and political forms already show that they eschew the traditional forms of representational politics. As Lorey points out, “What is obvious is that the contemporary normalization of precarization substantially challenges established forms of politics. It is not only the capitalist mode of production that finds itself in special crisis; the fundamental crisis of modes of political representation also becomes conspicuous” (2015, 61). Precarity is now taken as a reality for political mobilization and connection. There is no assumption that deliverance from precariousness is in the offing, to be delivered through the institutions of the social welfare state.

The new movements are shifting the grounds of political action. The recomposition of forces occurs on a basis of participatory horizontalism and decentralization. It moves beyond the terms of welfare state inclusion/exclusion and suggests new solidarities. As Negri argues, “Another fact is the radical egalitarianism that increasingly emerges, beginning from the base with the demand for the rights of immigrants or the social wage for precarious workers. In short, the opening of the borders and implicit cosmopolitanism” (2008, 27). The demands are at the base of a sort of new enlightenment for commentators like Negri. This is a biopolitical enlightenment that exposes new concepts of reason. This is not a functional or instrumental “superannuation of the capitalist order” but a concrete transition “of solidarity in the biological perspective” (Negri 2008, 28). Negri argues:
However, the new labor power and the men who live reading in the common their desire for happiness (I mean the proletariat of immaterial and precarious labor, cognitive and affective today) feel violence like the arms of those who command them, as continual expropriation—increasingly unjustified—of their knowledge, as power that cuts the soul and every vital substance. (2008, 101)

The current period is a transition of classes and the general forms of governance of empire. For the global multitudes it is uncertain what the articulations between the “migratory movements and multitudinous structures” will be (Negri 2008, 101). What is the common ground between the socially precarious and the migrants? What does it mean “to bring together precarious intellectuals, old mass workers, and immigration” (Negri 2008, 101)? For Negri: “At the limit, they can represent two opposed points: the migrant is the hero of spatial mobility, while the precarious worker is the hero of temporal flexibility. But what brought them together is capital” (2008, 101). This unification is a negative point that does not offer a clear political articulation of the two situations (Negri 2008, 102).

Alternative globalization demonstrations express a recomposition of the multitude (as diversity and singularity). For Negri, “either singularity is shared or it becomes individualism, which is something negative” (2008, 97). The specificity of each subjugation resonates through the generalization of precariousness. The new egalitarianism is not about the flattening out of difference, it is not about the indistinct. As Negri suggests, “On the contrary, it is open to singularities that live and produce within this common network. To be equal is to have equal possibilities and capacities of expression that are effective and that exist within the totality of the activities of the multitude” (2008, 28). For Negri, “Production and freedom are born in the network. The network is always a network of singularity, expression, and production of differences” (2008, 28). It is, too, a production of linkages of resonance.
Quebec City and Genoa were watershed moments (even if soon eclipsed by 9/11). They both represented a recomposition, a renovation for the movement of movements in the global North. With reference to Genoa, Negri suggests it announced neither a movement of class nor a student movement, a “new harlequin subject” (2008, 93). Such was also true of Quebec City. These were spaces on the making. For some they signaled the possibility of a new proletarian Left, which is “multitudinous, intellectual, precarious” (Negri 2008, 93). Genoa in the 1960s was the site of recognition of the mass worker (of operaismo), the port workers and the immigrant workers of the steel and auto industries. In Carlini Stadium, where the militants who came to Genoa met, there developed experiments of sharing rather than of leadership or technique. There were practices of a “regime of assemblage” (Negri 2008, 94). From this came the mass resistance to repression that followed as defense of the G8 became a “war of low intensity” or a form of “preventative war” (Negri 2008, 94).

It is a new proletarian Left that hints at recomposing in the renewed movements of precarity. The new mobilizations pose the possibility of resistance beyond the momentary uprisings that give public expression to them.

The biopower of the Crisis States must be confronted by new democratic (participatory) forms. As Negri notes, though, participation must be comprehended within mass solutions. This involves, of course, many transitions and levels (Negri 2008, 155–156). For Negri, “It is therefore in the liberation from exploitation and in the construction of the common that the poles of the political constitution are defined” (2008, 156). This is the impetus of commonism and new forms of political convergence through defense of the commons.
Toward the Positive in Struggle

Alain Badiou suggests that this “time of riots” signals nothing short of a rebirth of history. In his view, the urgent character of this time is more readily perceived by the ruling classes at present. And this is reflected in their constant anxiety and the obsessive approach to building up their weapons, both judicial and military (Badiou 2012, 5). The activity of the ruling classes makes it even more pressing that the working classes develop their own new future.

The apparent early victories in Tunisia and Egypt quickly re/turned to crises of their own for the popular constituents of the uprising. In Libya the risings were quickly sidelined by an imperialist invasion and restoration of local clientelism. In Syria the risings have been on the one hand (ISIS and the government war crimes) calamitous and on the other (Rojava and the anarchist fight in Kobanê) rich with historical possibilities (suggesting a new context). And these are contexts in which the mobilizations have been more militant and broader than in the Western liberal democracies.

The risings do show most of all that a popular action is always possible, even under awful circumstances. If the current risings against crisis in the Western liberal democracies have faltered, it is in part because they have so far been expressed in negative terms (no austerity, so-and-so out, anti-this or that, etc.). There has yet to emerge a positive (or various positives) that express a viable alternative around which popular risings might coalesce and advance. The negative is never enough. It cannot replace the positive and its organization. It cannot fire the radical imagination.

Even the Occupy movement, which did provide, if in limited form, some crystallization of an idea, was much better at expressing clearly what it opposed than a compelling alternative—a convincing positive (sadly, too few found the option of sitting in tents with minimal provision—usually brought by unionized workers—to be a gripping vision of a positive alternative future).
Unfortunately, even otherwise clear-sighted commentators like Badiou become too enamored of the apparently novel forms of occupations. They see perhaps too much in the occupation and hope they present a unification of diverse subjects in a historic force (which, in minimal ways, perhaps it does express). But this intense local presence never poses a material threat to the ruling executive (though to specific figures within it they might be — and those can be made expendable without any real change to the system and its crisis).

To destroy a bank is an eruption of insurrectionary joy. To destroy systems of banking is another matter. For Negri: “But first we need to understand how a society without banks functions, we need to invent a new reality for ourselves” (2008, 97). And this is the positive character of struggle.